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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/19

TAGS: PREL PGOV CI

SUBJECT: President-Elect Pinera Invites President Obama to Chile

REF: SANTIAGO 50; SANTIAGO 19

CLASSIFIED BY: Paul Simons, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. President-elect Sebastian Pinera reiterated to the Ambassador his invitation to President Obama to visit Chile and use Santiago to deliver a "Cairo-style" speech to the region. He inquired about an early visit to Washington and requested a high level U.S. delegation attend his March 11 inauguration. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador called President-elect Sebastian Pinera on January 18 to congratulate him on winning the January 17 election (reftel a).

¶3. (C) Pinera welcomed the Ambassador's call and reiterated many of the points he raised with WHA A/S Valenzuela when they met on January 12 (reftel b). He offered to work closely with the United States in the region. He extended an invitation for President Obama to visit Chile later this year and use Santiago as a platform for a speech outlining U.S. relations with Latin America. Pinera also indicated that he would appreciate an early opportunity to meet with President Obama in Washington. In addition, he said that he would welcome a high level U.S. delegation at his inauguration on March 11.

¶4. (U) Pinera extended his warm regards to Secretary Clinton, as well as those of his wife, Cecilia Morel, whom he indicated knows the Secretary from her previous visits to Chile as First Lady.

¶5. (U) The Ambassador also phoned Eduardo Frei, who lost to Pinera in the election, and saluted him for his honest campaign and his service to Chile.

6 (C) Comment. President Obama's recent call to President Bachelet to coordinate assistance to Haiti was extremely well received here. A parallel approach to President-elect Pinera in the next few days would pay handsome dividends in getting us off to a strong start with this valuable partner eager and able to play a constructive role on the regional and global stage.

SIMONS